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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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(There follows the address of the president of the United States, Harry S. Truman, at the annual FAO conference in Washington, D.C., on November 22, 1949)

It is a great pleasure for me to meet again with the delegates to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and to welcome you to this meeting in the United States. We are happy that you can join with us again in our annual harvest festival--our Thanksgiving holiday. I hope that it will soon be possible for you to establish your permanent headquarters in the United States.

The Food and Agriculture Organization has an inspiring task, for you are working to increase the food supply of the people of the world. That task is central to the whole broad effort to raise living standards and achieve greater freedom for all mankind. All the work of the United Nations and its many associated organizations is important in building a peaceful world, but none is of more significance than yours. If by working together in this Organization, we can create an abundance of food for all countries, we shall bring better health, longer lives, and greater happiness to mankind everywhere.

For this reason, it was most appropriate that the Nobel peace prize this year should have been awarded to your former Director-General, Lord Boyd Orr, that great pioneer in international cooperation in food and agriculture. You delegates to this Organization can properly share in this recognition of the importance of your work to world peace.

We have all learned in recent years that if we are to achieve peace we must have a positive, forward-looking program to satisfy the physical needs and spiritual aspirations of mankind. Your Organization is primarily concerned with meeting the need of hundreds of millions of people for more and better food. To achieve this, your work centers around two major problems. The first is to increase the production of food stuffs and other agricultural commodities. The second is to see that those commodities reach the peoples and countries which need them.

We all know there are immense possibilities of increasing agricultural production throughout the world. The United States, for example, had a high agricultural production before the war--and yet during the war we were able to increase the production of many commodities tremendously by using new and better techniques. New hybrid varieties of field crops, better livestock, better fertilizers, amazing new weed and insect killers--these and many more advances in agricultural techniques are opening up new horizons of production. It is no exaggeration to say that, as a result, an agricultural revolution has been taking place in the United States.

If this can be done in our country, think of what can be done to increase production in those parts of the world where modern methods and modern machinery are relatively unknown. This is one of the great opportunities toward which I pointed in my inaugural address last January, when I spoke of the need for a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advance and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of under-developed areas.

In the beginning, the greatest advance will probably result from the most elementary improvements. The control of animal diseases and the improvement of simple tools, such as plows and threshing equipment, would greatly increase production and better the lot of millions of small farmers in many parts of the world.

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I know that the FAO understands these great possibilities. I am glad that your Organization has worked out a specific program as your part of the United Nations' effort along these lines. The United States will continue to look to the FAO for leadership in the international cooperative effort to increase food and agricultural production throughout the world. Our experience, our knowledge, our technical exports are all available to you, and I hope that you will continue to call upon them as needed.

Because your Organization is concerned with raising the living standards of people throughout the world, you are properly concerned not only with production, but also with the distribution of food and agricultural commodities. You understand the imperative necessity that the nations work together toward a system of international trade which will contribute to an expanding world economy.

The nations of the world have taken a number of progressive steps in this direction. The European Recovery Program is essentially an international effort to restore Western Europe as a vital force in a progressive world economy. The International Wheat Agreement is a practical means for achieving better distribution of world wheat supplies. Most of the trading nations have joined in agreements to reduce barriers to world trade.

As the nations regain the productive capacity destroyed during the war, and as new productive capacity is added by the growth of under-developed areas, we should find it easier to develop lasting patterns for the international exchange of goods and services. I hope that the International Trade Organization will soon be established to help expand world trade by carrying on a continuous and systematic attack on trade barriers.

At the present time, there is still need for resourcefulness in meeting certain immediate problems. I know that, at this session, the FAO will be considering ways and means of moving temporary surpluses of certain commodities from countries where they are not needed to countries where they are badly needed. The United States welcomes the initiative of this Organization in seeking a solution to this problem. We pledge ourselves to work wholeheartedly with the other members in attempting to devise practical and effective methods for solving it.

As our Thanksgiving season again approaches, we should all be reminded that the harvest has a two-fold significance. It is one mark of civilization to be able to produce abundantly, but it is a more important mark to be able to use abundance for the welfare of mankind. The United States is glad to work with the Food and Agriculture Organization toward the goal of increasing the production of food and improving its distribution. We regard this as a major cooperative endeavor toward our common objective of a stable and peaceful world.

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